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Dysentery

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admitted March 14th 1821.

A Dissertation on Dysentery.

Amidst the many subjects offered the candidate, upon which to display his abilities or explain his views; there is not one on which we feel ourselves capable either of advancing new ideas, or satisfactorily and usefully discussing those which now obtain the ascendancy. Shall we succeed in attaining useful mediocrity, we shall be better pleased than by the collision of opposition, to elicit the applause of some, whilst we deservedly recieve the contempt of others for our heedless temerity. We could perhaps advance wild unsupported theories, but no ingenuity of defence ought to save them from merited disapprobation. In medicine we want truth not sophistry tho' dressed never so bewitchingly, and every honest man will contribute his best endeavours for the support of the former and the abolition of the latter in all our disputations and contests, whatever they may be. To propose theories, or to pretend to originality, would argue a profundity of research, which tho' we would aspire to, to fancy ourselves possessed of, would be presumption in the highest degree unpardonable.

Without any farther prefatory remarks, we will now observe that we have chosen Dysentery as the subject of our essay. In this selection, we have been influenced by the frequent occurrence of the disease

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and its occasional great mortality, rather than with the hope of saying much new, or greatly adding to our stock of knowledge on this subject. Shall we succeed in giving a clear and succinct view of what we deem a correct theory of this disease, and of that treatment which we think best adapted to its cure, we shall esteem ourselves peculiarly fortunate. Should we fail in our attempt, we trust that the insuperable difficulties which a young man, unaided by practical experience labours under in composition, will stand as a sufficient excuse for the many errors we may be guilty of. Our objects will be in the following pages so far as we are able, to give the causes and treatment of Dysentery, together with the modus operandi of the remedies employed in its removal, and their connexion with each other. We are conscious of the magnitude of our undertaking, but where our opinions are unsupported by sound and legitimate argument, we wish them to hold only that rank which all vague suppositions are entitled to. We are fully aware that had we time and opportunities to have consulted the many good works which we possess on this disease, we might have added much to the length of the following treatise and perhaps not a little to its merit; but from these we were precluded and we trust that shall we succeed in attaining

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Dysentery is defined by Cullen,

"Pyrexia contagiosa; dejectiones frequentes, mucosæ vel sanguinolenta, retentis plerumque facilus alvinis; tormina; tenesmus."

This definition we find conveying a more correct idea of the disease than any we have seen, yet it is not unexceptionable. The contagiousness of Dysentery has been admitted on all sides from time immemorial until within a few years past, and even now with some few exceptions constitutes the prevailing doctrine on the Continent of Europe. By whom it was first denied we are unable certainly to say, tho' Dr. Harty is the only European author with whom we have met, who advocates a contrary opinion. He says, that Dysentery neither in its simple, intermittent, or Remittent form is contagious: that it is only so when combined with Typhus and here he ascribes it not to the virus specific to Dysentery, but to the contagion of Fever. Dr. Chapman we believe to have been the first American physician who advanced a similar doctrine.

Were we to attempt to explain why Dysentery with so many other diseases of a like character have been ranked under the head of contagion, we should be lead into a disquisition infinitely too lengthy for the present paper. We will merely observe, that it appears to us

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to have arisen from Physicians not having sufficiently discriminated between Contagious, Atmospheric and Endemic diseases? — it having hitherto been enough to establish the contagion of a disease, to ascertain its universal prevalence in particular neighbourhoods, districts or towns; wholly neglecting farther to investigate its remote cause. By this mode of fixing the character of a disease, not one belonging to either of the above classes, but would be found to possess all the qualities necessary to constitute contagion. We having ascertained that there really exist such diseases as Contagious, Atmospheric and Endemic, is all that is requisite to convince us, that it was very possible and probable from one property possessed in common by all, to range any disease having that property under the head of contagion. This equally shows us the necessity of more precisely ascertaining and defining the boundaries between each of these classes of diseases. A work on this plan would contribute much to medical Science. We confess ourselves incompetent to the task, would our limits allow it; but we will venture to give a definition of each of them, which is all that our present purposes require.

1st. <u>Of Contagion</u>. By a contagious disease we understand one which (under particular laws) may be propagated independent of all extraneous causes, in any situation and under any circumstances, it being only

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It sometimes comes on with a diarrhœa, the patient [illegible] gradually increasing until it becomes a confirmed [illegible]. Diarrhœa is found to produce, or by the relaxed state of the natural mucous [illegible] parts, which thence become irritated and inflamed, from which [illegible] easily get worse.

The rain in this disease is generally of the profuse kind, but it may be [illegible] at first in small quantities, at occasions [illegible] rather, [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] more and more.

The Fever in this disease is [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] rather [illegible] with [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible] it may be confined with dominant Fever, and if [illegible] moderate, we may conclude when [illegible] of Tissues [illegible] various appearance, some dark blue [illegible] little [illegible] mixed with red [illegible] commencement [illegible] formed, [illegible] Sanguinea Villa.

In Sanguinea the natural Fever is generally not [illegible] to phrase, it is in the most common [illegible] called scarlet, or common [illegible] attended with a [illegible] fever, [illegible] which is also [illegible] which is also [illegible].

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

proof of alteration of the mucous [illegible] other place, but in [illegible] of [illegible] [illegible] that food may be secreted and passed from [illegible] without any erosion taking place. [illegible] speak of substances voided by stool called [illegible] which they conceived to be pieces of the mucous coat of the intestines. That opinion is [illegible] when one has adopted and [illegible] from [illegible] substances.

Others describe substances denominated Cephalo Fungus, the appearance of which they conceived denoted an affection of the lower part of the alimentary canal. There have been many ingenious dissertations on the formation and structure, yet we cannot [illegible] that they ought to be [illegible] to any thing else than the [illegible] changed by [illegible]. Some have thought the [illegible] and cephalo fungus [illegible] comparatively [illegible] distinctness.

The various substances evacuated by stool are often the result of vomiting. The matter thus vomited is [illegible] or less bilious, but what connection this has with the disease [illegible] day [illegible] it is [illegible] effect of [illegible] and the particular season and climate in which the disease occurs.

The various symptoms of a violent [illegible] in a very severe form [illegible] and accompany the disease.

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

Debility is said to prevail in this disease, but [illegible] will find it [illegible] in [illegible] the dysentery [illegible] facts always [illegible], and excepting the Tropical States either [illegible] or the previous enfeeblement or the loss by evacuations

Generally speaking it commences as it comes on with diarrhœa, at the same time the urgency of the stools and griping gradually abating, the tissue totally ceases

These are the most usual terminations in health, but should it end in death, it may be either in a few days by excessive evacuations, or a fatal debility may be produced by a more protracted and severe state of the disease. It also often ends fatally by a tendency purging which succeeds the dysentery, but this is not a frequent or marked symptom.

Sometimes the disease leaves behind it certain effects of the stomach, as Dyspepsia, Flatulence &c &c

Dysentery when it ends fatally is often in a few days, but more general by death is produced by the gradual exhaustion of the vital powers.

When it terminates in health, the most usual period of duration is from [illegible] to [illegible] days

Sometimes it becomes chronic, lasting months, years, and even perhaps the patient's entire life; this form is very difficult cure.

Diagnosis

[illegible]

Prognosis

[illegible]

Diagnosis. The only disease with which Dysentery is liable to be confounded, is Diarrhœa, and notwithstanding the several distinctions which have been drawn to enable us to distinguish the one from the other, some difficulty still attends the diagnosis, which arises from the association of the respectively similar symptoms, which are essential to these two diseases, and from their being so generally in common by them, than by attending to any one of them, it may be supposed to be the other.

Prognosis. When there is no fever the disease is mild and when it is slight, or of the common kind, it is a favorable prognosis. When it is in the common or mild sense, as it is left at the first degree of debility, it marks a dangerous disease, but not so much so as when the debility is one of the primary symptoms. When it is of the Typhoid type there is danger of a chronic form and it may occur.

The softness and moisture of the skin, the appetite still remaining good, and a moderate state of the other symptoms are among the best prognostics.

The relative degree of the tenesmus and tenesmus and the appearance of the stools, afford one best means of ascertaining the probable termination of the disease.

The tenesmus and tenesmus being great and the rectum bleeds, if much pain and in small quantities are unfavorable. Or [illegible]

Morbid Appea

Sometimes there are

may be severe, yet if there are copious evacuations of the natural feces [illegible] with [illegible] [illegible], we have little to dread.

When pure blood is evacuated from the commencement in large quantities, there is much danger, the patient seldom surviving over a few days.

The presence of gangrene is denoted by the fetid stools, a sudden cessation of pain, [illegible] the pulse, &c.

Upon the whole it would be improper and altogether impossible for a medical man to form his prognosis from this or that single symptom, but it should be drawn from the consideration of them all conjointly taken. The practice of prognosis, is we think alone serviceable, so far as it enables us to ascertain the degree of the disease, and admonishes us to be ready in procuring [illegible] [illegible] for its removal.

Morbid Appearances after Death.

We always find marks of active inflammation having existed in the intestines previous to death. Sometimes we see ulcerations, and small gangrenous spots throughout the intestines [illegible] the [illegible].

We [illegible] meet with portions of a dark colour in a gangrenous state, [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] both.

We sometimes find contractions of the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible]; but their appearance upon dissection is not of itself [illegible] [illegible] not distinct before death, for as it [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]. Constrictions [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] as the intestine [illegible] [illegible] affected, and [illegible] together with the inflammation occurs most [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], appears to be the principal difference between this disease and Enteritis, in which as [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] is primarily affected.

The [illegible] [illegible] inflammation extending to all the coats of the intestine, [illegible] adhesions between their convolutions, [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] surfaces, abscesses between their coats [illegible].

[illegible], inflammation, [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the neighbouring viscera, as the Stomach, Liver, Spleen, Pancreas, &c.

Small, [illegible], black [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] small Pox, are mentioned as having been found in the intestinal canal [illegible]; but they have [illegible] been detected, [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] from the inattention of dissectors. The Mesentery [illegible] is often loaded with fat, [illegible] sometimes [illegible] [illegible] wasted containing abscesses, tubercles &c.

The [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], the consequence of previous [illegible] [illegible] are

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deduce those facts relative to the causes of a disease from [illegible] times; this a superficial view of the subject could lead into serious mistakes. Such difficulties which offer itself [illegible] advancement in the development of the connection between the causes and consequent [illegible] disease, as for instance in the case of Dysentery, after an obstructed perspiration acts as a cause, the fact [illegible] to the source of many other diseases; hence we must suppose that [illegible] some conjunct cause, associated with obstructed perspiration [illegible] the observed action on the bowels in preference to any other function [illegible] of these conjunct causes, where such exist in so many diseases, we must probably so long remain unacquainted with their remote causes.

Mosely in the Systematic Difficulties of Assistance [illegible] in Fever of the season [illegible] the [illegible] finding that the remote cause [illegible] obstructed perspiration. Mosely doubtless [illegible] opinion, that we had observed the exacerbations of the disease regularly [illegible] with use of the Fever at that time [illegible]. Whether this affords any solution of the difficulty abovementioned, we cannot say. In the present case then as in many others, for the reasons already stated, we are compelled to acknowledge our inability from the symptoms of a disease to ascertain the remote cause; yet this were we [illegible] [illegible] should we [illegible]

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case even in the first stages. There can be no doubt as to the existence of an irritability which most unequivocally denotes the presence of inflammation. From the frequent and early appearance of these symptoms, and because the Theory of Inflammation best agrees with the remote cause which we have adopted, we are inclined to range ourselves among its advocates. The view of the treatment which has been found most successful tends to corroborate, and goes far to establish its truth. Dr. Cullen's hypothesis, [illegible] can be seen in the [illegible], [illegible] given premises [illegible] that, [illegible] [illegible] of spirits and cold, [illegible] from [illegible] [illegible] of suppressed perspiration, [illegible] and [illegible], [illegible] which we can [illegible] [illegible] and manifestly injurious effects of the former. The appearances on dissection, always show inflammation [illegible] previous to death, sometimes [illegible] the existence of [illegible] yet we think all such inferences drawn from the morbid [illegible] are equivocal, the arguments [illegible] proximate cause of the disease, are [illegible] sufficient to establish our theory.

Our Pathology of this disease, is then thus; Dysentery when Epidemic strictly speaking, is the Fever of the Season [illegible] by obstructed perspiration,

which produces an inflammation of the intestines, whence irritable conditions and from these two secondary actions all the symptoms observed take their rise.

And now having gone through, we, this may not be an inappropriate place to make some apology for the imperfect manner, in which we have circulated an account of the theory of this disease, and to give some explanation of the standing, which we think we are entitled to hold. Unaided by the experience of numberless years, we must when we have deviated from the beaten track, have entered a field of theory directed alone by reason and argument; and when they shall appear to have detected as we wish the propositions that we have put forth, it is rather received in the light of hints and queries, which may serve to assist the learned, the more profound, than as affectionate regard from an over responsible one.

Treatment. Conformably to that theory we have laid down, we shall proceed to the consideration of that treatment of this disease, which we think best suited to the removal of the remote cause and invigorating the constitution by action of the fluids, after the medicine of the disease is. In all diseases, the object of our remedies must be either the removal of the remote causes when they are evident; or by the influence deduced from an acquaintance with them, our endeavours must be directed to the subduing of

[illegible]

[illegible] and that we are, the succeeding in the cure intended. This latter method is [illegible] from the [illegible] set, the imperfection of our knowledge of the [illegible] of the disease which just and rational principles. It is manifestly unnecessary, and but an excuse for our ignorance. In other cases where the mode of cure dictated by nature, is dangerous to be pursued, there even when nature succeeds to the restoration of health, it is at the risk to be subjected, from the previous effects as relates the patient to [illegible] victim, we are at here substitute another and a safer one in its place.

In Dysentery we think the remote and apparently most [illegible] from an indication upon, at the same time paying a proper attention to the proximate cause, so far as we can trace their connexion, we indicate as are therefore to excite the natural healthy action of the capillaries, and to give them tone. Some of the remedies which we shall use for this purpose, are not directly adapted to the fulfilment of these indications, but are other to be regarded as essential in Epidemics.

In the commencement of the disease, it has long been the practice

to resort to Emetics, with the view of cleansing the stomach, and by the peristaltic motion thus excited, to check the action downwards. By [illegible] the intentions of [illegible] to relieve the stomach from the demand [illegible] frequent concomitant, and chiefly to the tendency of causing a revulsion to the surface, and thus [illegible] By him his Muriatic Solution was greatly preferred; other, Ipecacuanha and Tartar Emetic were used. We are disposed to think that Emetics are more admissible in the climate in which Dr. Mosely practised, than we would be found in the United States, from the disease being there often accompanied with bilious diseases. Mosely even goes so far as to advise that repetition should not the first make a favorable impression on the disease. Dr. Chalmers thinks on this least excited to Emetics [illegible] the Lancet Bleeding; but still he concedes in his [illegible] recipes that indurations in cases combined with Intermittent Fever with a loaded and affected stomach which is often the case in warm climates; with [illegible] effects [illegible] by emetics. The greatest objection to the use of Emetics is that they [illegible] with the more set of remedies on the lines of which [illegible] to speak.

In the commencement of the disease, and prior to the use of all other remedies, we must resort to the use of Emetics to the quantity of [illegible] to the general excitement

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and local inflammation present. This is not only to lessen action, but to prepare the system for the more effectual operation of diaphoretics. By all, the propriety of the venesection has been admitted, but in our division, practitioners generally have been much so disposing of this remedy, in consequence of the dread of inducing debility, which as we believe, will not be so readily produced by the prompt and active use of it. Thus at a blow rooting out the disease, as by imploring with remedies in themselves inefficient, or rendered so by the unnatural state of the system. It is an indispensable auxiliary to the diaphoretic plan. In more advanced stages we should not be deterred, from it, we should be governed in local symptoms expressed, only regulating the quantity by the state of the system as well as of the local affection.

The other the most determinate detraction of blood of disease will yield to those remedies which it for had been ineffectually used.

The 2d most of such Cathartics which are of primary importance in this disease. We have already observed that our greatest objection to emetics was that they so much irritated the mucous membrane. Cathartics. We all know that [illegible] on the disease [illegible] and we must think the [illegible] of giving Emetics and [illegible] [illegible]

for their evacuation will answer so well, as the vigorous use of the most active cathartics at once. [illegible] most cases will be necessary, [illegible] large dose of some active cathartic, so as to produce a complete evacuation of the [illegible]; thus greatly facilitating the [illegible] of the other [illegible], and which [illegible] particularly adapted to the fulfilment of [illegible]. [illegible] to be indispensable in [illegible] it will be much the safest and most efficient [illegible]

[illegible] recommended, but [illegible] ~~[illegible]~~ [illegible] to delay the evacuations [illegible] complete [illegible]

[illegible] the treatment of [illegible] doses is much recommended and appears eminently calculated to attain this object. [illegible] Ipecacuanha [illegible] rest, and particularly from that of our venerable Professor Dr Chapman; we are disinclined to give it the decided preference. Dr Mosely speaks in the highest terms of [illegible] and [illegible] We are inclined to think that could we procure it pure, it would answer every end.

It is proper to state that immediately after the [illegible] of the Purgative, [illegible] combined with Laudanum, might go far towards the removal of the disease. It is to be recollected that [illegible] we are enabled to increase the dose, without [illegible] nausea. [illegible] opium may be

be used in much larger quantities with perfect safety than at other times. There is also useful a more stable and strong pulse in a more advanced period of the disease than all danger as to the mortal effects are removed. [illegible] Gibson on this disease than by quoting the following from his work. "The real cause [illegible] of the disease; [illegible] and does not need [illegible] to take off the irritation, tranquilizing the medicines and regulating their [illegible] effect and to [illegible] admiration"

The plan of treatment we have laid down is simple, as we shall most usually have to [illegible], but we have [illegible] the importance of the [illegible] the beginning [illegible] the [illegible] and [illegible] to arrest the progress and affect time for the exhibition of other remedies.

Having attended the first [illegible] and [illegible] to [illegible], and [illegible] to imagine that the removal of the remote cause would be attended by a consequent abolition of the disease; but this is not [illegible] the case, and we cannot lay [illegible] the remedies, which are to be varied according to

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the state of the symptoms be judged of [illegible] [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] Stimulants [illegible] [illegible] Tranquillizers. [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] by habit, and approaches the form of Diarrhea, or [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] Dover's Powder, Kino, Logwood, [illegible] and the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]; this in certain cases [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible].

Chronic State. Here we shall derive most [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] other remedies, a strict attention [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] of the [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] patient. The exercise of gestation [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible], [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] attempts [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] by [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] those [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the System, [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the Disease.

Typhus State. Here it may be either originally [illegible] [illegible] with Typhus [illegible]

instantly recur

[illegible]

In the second stage when [illegible] the mucous [illegible], we must instantly resort to mercury, gradually insinuating it into the system. The strength must be upheld by the diffusible stimuli. In many cases it may be advantageous to combine mercury and with it, and, hence the mercurial [illegible] internal may be substituted. In some cases of cancer, rarely of chronic and nitric acid have been highly recommended. We are disposed to think, as many of the mercurials in the case which precedes, [illegible] cancer [illegible] be used.

When dysentery is combined with intermittent fever, it has been [illegible] many particulars [illegible] [illegible] and [illegible] much [illegible] [illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

Hyp.

Figures

[illegible]

Clyde [illegible]

Hannil R.R. [illegible]

to derive benefit from its warmth, in the latter from distending the abdomen and giving an [illegible] to the intestines. If the latter [illegible] we think it would be useful, at least [illegible] in other [illegible]. We are disposed to think it in some cases a useful auxiliary particularly in the chronic state of Dysentery and Diarrhœa. In our division had decided in Diarrhœa.

Regimen. The diet in this disease must be mild and digestible. The farinaceous articles are generally preferred. Demulcents are of great use both as a diet, of food and of medicine. The gum of the flixt[illegible] Elm, [illegible] of gum [illegible], Tapioca, Arrow Root, sago, Barley water, gruel, thin [illegible] to [illegible], and to many they are thought [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the patient. In more advanced stages [illegible] [illegible] the patient [illegible] [illegible], [illegible] Bark and [illegible]. If [illegible] [illegible] nutritious and digestible [illegible] are to be used. It [illegible] [illegible] be [illegible] enough mentioned here that the patient should always in acute Dysentery be confined to a recumbent posture. This often greatly [illegible] its severity, and neglecting it has been often [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] the use of the various remedies.

It might, perhaps, be expected that we should here give an [illegible] of the use of [illegible], Bark and Mercury of which so much has been said by [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible] [illegible].

of mercury we have already said enough, of wine and bark we [illegible] merely observe they are never to be given in the inflammatory state of the disease. On the diet [illegible] we conceive [illegible] less more as a reference to the treatment of Typhus Fever will be [illegible] use of them made in this disease [illegible], and by which being governed we can readily correctly and carefully attend to the state of the system.

According to our promise we would here enter into the consideration of the modus operandi of the medicines [illegible] had we not so fully given our ideas [illegible] in another place [illegible] outside.

We have now brought this subject to a close. Much more might and ought to have been done to have made the subject [illegible] the [illegible] of the [illegible] but from a [illegible] that [illegible] which we assigned ourselves, and perhaps unnecessarily multiplied our remarks [illegible] we shall not only be satisfied but will esteem such a [illegible] as the greatest and most flattering [illegible] which [illegible]

We are condemned

We are conscious that on some parts we have been obscure, on others perhaps needlessly verbose; in other places our observations are unattended by those explanations which ought to have accompanied them. Our only excuse for these imperfections is the hurry in which we have written. Could we have devoted more time to this purpose, we flatter ourselves we might have rendered it much more perfect; by making free use of the works of others, but we have always thought that the task thus imposed on us, was for the purpose of soliciting the expression of our own sentiments, rather than those of others. Let it not be understood from this that we make any pretensions to originality. Far be such vain attempts from us, but we mean that an accurate account of any disease, from the writer in his own language, would as we imagine be considered as the surest criterion of his acquaintance with that disease. On the other hand we confess ourselves greatly indebted to the works of several authors for the preceding Essay, but chiefly to the Lectures of Dr. Chapman.

We now with diffidence and hope, submit it to the judgement of that learned body, whose approbation we shall esteem the most honorable applause we can obtain. Here we stop and whether it be consigned to infamy or oblivion, we trust it will be viewed rather as a hasty production in conformity to the laws of our celebrated University, than as an accurate test of our abilities and qualifications (tho we have no reason to boast) in medical Science.

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